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A

NARRATIVE
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS
OF THE

Protestant Dissenters
Of the Three DENOMINATIONS;

Relating to the REPEALS of the
Corporation and Test Acts,
From the YEAR 1731, to the present Time.

Addressed to the DISSENTERS.

L O N D O N :

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A NARRATIVE of the Proceedings of
the PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

Gentlemen,



ABOUT the Opening of the Session of Parliament in 1731, there appeared among the Protestant Dissenters, in several Parts of the Kingdom, a very deep Sense of the Unreasonableness of the Sacramental Test and Corporation Acts, as they occasioned a Prostitution of a sacred Rite of our holy Religion, were Restraints upon the Consciences of many Dissenters, and a Mark of Infamy upon them all, and a grievous Burden on all the parochial Clergy: As they were founded upon persecuting Principles, had occasioned two other severe Laws against the Dissenters in the Reign of Queen *Anne*; viz. the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts; and had a natural Tendency to introduce other Laws of the same kind.

Upon this View the Protestant Dissenters prepared Petitions, in several Parts, to the H—— of C—— for the Repeal of those two Acts, so far as they related to themselves, and wrote Letters to their Friends in *London*, communicating their Design, and desiring the Concurrence and joint Influence of the Dissenters in this City.

Some of the *London* Ministers, who have thought fit to take the Lead for some Years past, and from their distributing the Fund-Money, and other large Sums, have great Weight and Influence over our Affairs, desired that those Petitions might be

laid aside till the next Session of Parliament. They acknowledged, indeed, that they were the Proofs of a laudable Zeal in the Petitioners, but alledged, however, that they were ill-timed, the Dissenters not having concerted their Measures for backing their Petitions; and the Petitions themselves being like to be ill received by the M——rs, because they designed but a short Session. But they added, that if their Brethren in the Country would agree to lay aside their Petitions for the present, they would prepare Pamphlets, and concert Measures so fully against the ensuing Session of Parliament, as that the Petitions should have the whole Force of the Dissenters united to support them; and they gave the strongest and most positive Assurances, that if this Request of theirs was complied with, they would press the Repeals with all their Might, tho' all the M——rs should be against them.

Here a Regard to Union among their selves, a Confidence in the Veracity of those who promis'd it, with a Complaisance to the M——rs, against what was thought to be right and reasonable, laid the Foundation of their first Disappointment.

During the Recess from Parliament, these Dissenting Ministers, with some other Gentlemen, made Application to a great Man, who told them, that the Thing was just and fit in itself, and was due to them, and would be more for the Service of the Government than of the Dissenters themselves: But that they had consider'd the List of the Members, and tho' they could carry the Repeals desired, yet it would be with as much Difficulty, and by as small a Majority, as they had ever carried any Government Question; and that it would raise the Cry of the Church, and prejudice some of the Whigs in their approaching Elections.

These Dissenting Ministers, who are your L—d Al—rs, as I have already hinted, finding that those Repeals were not agreeable to the M—r, instead of entering into Concert with their Friends and Brethren in the Country, or writing in behalf of the Repeals, and giving the Attempt of them the Force of the whole Body united, (tho' their Promise was engaged, and had been unhappily trusted) avoided their most intimate Friends whom they thought to be zealous for those Repeals, and used all manner of Arts with the utmost Industry in private Conversations and Correspondencies, to damp and extinguish the Zeal that there was for them, and even to cry up the Danger and Hazard that there was to Civil Liberty itself and the Toleration, in attempting them.

The Menaces of a great P—te to call on all the Dissenting Ministers to subscribe the Articles, were not forgotten to be trumpeted about, and such Terrors were industriously scatter'd abroad, as appear'd likely to frighten the Weak-hearted from the Attempt.

Thus did these Ministers endeavour to prevent all Attempts for these Repeals; and at the yearly Meeting of the *London Ministers*, Oct. 3. 1732, tho' they came into a Vote *that the Civil Affairs relating to the general Interest should be referr'd to Gentlemen*, yet they seemed to be fearful lest it should come into their Hands, and to be desirous of preventing it. For many thinking that such a general Vote would be of little Service effectually to transmit the Management of our Civil Affairs into the Hands of Gentlemen, made these two following Motions besides, *viz. That it should be resolved advisable, that a considerable Number of Gentlemen might meet to consider what Steps were fit to be taken with relation to the Repeals of the Corporation and Test Acts the ensuing Session of Parliament :*

ment : And that some particular Gentlemen might be then named, of whom they should desire this. And it was not without great Opposition that the former of these could be carried ; and the latter was superseded and set aside with this Answer, That the Design would execute itself without any Nomination at all.

Those Ministers who moved to have the Conduct of the Civil Interests removed into the Hands of Gentlemen, and some of those who concurred with the Motion, probably did it because they apprehended that the Gentlemen would manage them more to Advantage than those who had hitherto had them in their Hands. But many did it, in all probability, in order to get rid of a troublesome Business, which would bring Difficulties upon them which way soever they turned themselves, and either disoblige their Congregations by opposing the Repeals, or those whose Benevolence they received, if they should encourage and promote them. This seemed to be the generous Spring of their Conduct in getting this Business off their own Hands, but they did not take the least Care to put Gentlemen in Possession of their Affairs, by ordering these Resolutions of theirs so much as to be communicated to them, or by any other Method whatsoever.

A little after this a worthy Minister or two did voluntarily address themselves to two or three Gentlemen, (not as from the Body, or in consideration of their Resolutions, but purely of themselves) and desir'd them to take the Affair of the Repeals under their Consideration, and see what they could do for them. Those two or three Gentlemen got a few others together, in all nineteen ; and, except two or three of them, they all appear'd to be for soliciting the Repeals that next Session.

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This private Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen happening soon after the general Meeting of Dissenting Ministers, some have industriously endeavoured to connect them, and graft the Proceedings of the Gentlemen upon the Votes of the Ministers; by this means thinking to prove that the Extent of the Matter of the Trust reposed in the Gentlemen of the Committee is to be measured by *the Vote of the Body of Ministers*, which it is said * *was conceived in Expressions of as full Meaning as (in) a later Recommendation of a new Choice of Deputies.*

But here it is obvious that the first general Vote of the Ministers is the only thing had in View, and the Remarker seems ignorant that there was any other Vote passed in that Assembly, whereas there was another more particular Resolution come to by the Body, which he had full as much Reason to refer to as the former. But I would observe that those Resolutions of the Ministers have neither of them any Connection with the subsequent Proceedings either of the Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen, or of the Generality, or of the Committee; nor were they either of them ever laid before any of their Meetings, or made or treated by them as the Ground-work of their Proceedings; nor, as far as I can find, were they ever refer'd to in the whole Course of this Affair, as regarded in such a Light; but the Affair of the Repeals was the single Matter to which the Views, Debates, and Transactions of the Dissenters were all this while confined, and that independently and irrespectively to any Resolutions which were taken by the Ministers.

Before this Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen, many Dissenters in several Counties met together, and
came

* Remarks on the Letter to the Deputies, and the Right of the Committee, &c. p. 4.

came to a Resolution of the same kind as had been expressed there; and others a little after it. All of them had the same Tendency, though some were more full and vigorous than others. The Places which came to this Resolution were *Dorsetshire*, Part of *Somersetshire*, *Wilts*, *Berks*, *Bucks*, *Essex*, several Parts of *Yorkshire*, *Hertfordshire*, *Bristol*, *Liverpool*, &c. And others were ready, but waited to see what Reception this Affair would meet with at *London*.

The Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen agreed to call the Dissenters in *London* together in a promiscuous and voluntary Meeting in *Silver-street*, Nov. 19. 1732.

Great Pains were taken to have this Meeting fill'd with Gentlemen of the B—k and other Companies, Governors, Directors, Clerks, and other inferior Officers, with other known Dependants on Persons in Power: And a certain Minister in *London* will remember, whether he was not pleas'd to acquaint a Lady of his Congregation, that he had spent two Hours every Afternoon for a Fortnight before that Meeting, to consider who were proper Persons to get to that Meeting, and what were the likeliest Methods to get them there.

It is also well known that Letters were wrote to those Dissenters to be there who were against soliciting the Repeals, as appear'd by the Declaration of some of them at that Meeting; and that no Measures at all were taken to get those there who were for it. Those who were thought to be against soliciting them were pressed to be there early, and to fill the Body of the Place, which they accordingly did. The Seat just under the Chairman's was reserved for those who were designed by the Leaders of the Meeting to be chosen of a Committee, if they should find themselves obliged to proceed so far; and such remoter

ter Seats as those who were against the Repeals could not fill, were left for such of those who were for them as might happen to be there.

By this means those who were for dropping the Repeals made a much greater Shew and Appearance at that Meeting than they could have done from their bare Numbers, and had all the Advantages which any Party Arts, which were pretty freely used, could give them.

Mr. H—n appear'd at this Meeting, who had never appear'd at any either publick or private Meetings of the Dissenters called to consult about the Management of their Civil Affairs before, and had refused to come to some to which he had been invited by some of the chief Dissenters. It must therefore be supposed that *some more powerful Application than from any Dissenters* engaged him to be present at this Meeting of Dissenters, which was the most publick that till that time had ever been known.

Some of this Meeting called on Mr. Ab——y, a Gentleman of the long Robe, to take the Chair, but he was not present. Several of those who had filled the Body of the Place, called on Mr. H—n to take it, who, without any Question or Vote for that purpose, took the Chair immediately, as knowing himself intended for it; and having prepared a Speech to open this Meeting with, he pointed out to them the Affair of the Repeals, as the sole View to which he would have them direct their Proceedings.

It was evident that the Persons, intended by those who were for dropping the Repeals, to be the Leaders of this Meeting, were desirous to prevent this Meeting from doing any thing at all but adjourning, and that for so long a time, as that every body might see, not only that nothing

was intended to be done, but that the very Possibility of doing any thing about the Repeals, was taken away : And it is believed by some, and not without Reason, that the Affair of the Repeals was agreed to be dropp'd in a private Meeting of some managing Persons before this Meeting of the Generality in *Silver-Street, Nov. 19.* Agreeably to which Design, some there called out for an Adjournment of Six Months, some for one of Three Months : But they being reproached with evidently having no other End in view, but to make that Meeting act the mere Farce of pretending to do Business, while they did not intend to do any, they were at length forced to yeild to appoint a Committee of Twenty-one Gentlemen, *To consider when, and in what manner to apply for the Repeals of the Corporation and Test Acts, and to report their Opinion to the next Meeting.*

The Gentlemen at that Meeting, named Persons for this Committee in the same manner as is practised in the H—e of C—ns, but the Chairman took down their Names in such Order as he saw fit, and put them up to the Vote as he saw fit, and put them affirmatively only, and not negatively ; and declared Eighteen of the Persons nominated at once, on whom, as he said, the Majority of Hands fell ; and then put up several others again, out of which he declared Three more, which compleated the Number of which it had been resolved the Committee should consist.

This was a very strange manner of declaring a Choice, and put the Nomination of this Committee entirely into Mr. H—n's Hands. The only way to have kept it in the Assemblies, was to have put the Question on every Person nominated, affirmatively and negatively, as all other Questions

ons are put, and so to have seen whether more were for or against him.

No body in the Assembly opposed this Method, for no body knew what Method they were taking, or what they were doing, but a few about the Chair, among whom Things passed in a kind of Whisper. Many of the Assembly did not think that the Chairman's Declarations were exact, which cannot indeed be wonder'd at, how much soever he might be determin'd to do fairly, considering the Difficulties he was under, from its being a numerous Assembly, held by Candle-light, from those who wish'd well to the Repeals being at a Distance from him, and those who were for discountenancing the Attempt being, as it were, all round about him.

He at length declared the following Gentlemen to be the Persons who were chosen; *Thomas Abney Esq; Dr. Avery, Mr. George Baker, John Bance Esq; Lord Viscount Barrington, Mr. James Bradley, Stamp Brooksbank Esq; Mr. Richard Coope, Nathaniel Garland Esq; Nathaniel Gould Esq; Mr. Peter Hind, Samuel Holden Esq; Mr. John Hollister, Matthew Howard Esq; John Jacobs Esq; Mr. Samuel Lessingham, Mr. Benjamin Mee, Mr. Joseph Pace Jun. Mr. James Ruck, Mr. William Snell, Mr. Francis Wilks.*

The Committee being thus chosen, Mr. H—n was just going to put the Question of Adjournment, which had put an End to all further Proceedings, had not one of the Meeting, who is well known to have distinguished himself all along for the Repeals, mov'd, That they would order the Committee immediately to withdraw and adjourn themselves, or that else it was impossible for the Committee ever to meet: That being moved, was

order'd, and the Generality adjourned to *Nov. 29.* to meet at the same Hour and Place.

After this Committee was chosen, those Dissenting Ministers, who being the Elder Men, have the greatest Power in distributing the Fund-Money, and who, with such as they please to associate with themselves, are the sole Distributors of *those other large Sums, which, at first being made publick, were generally look'd on as the Price of our Liberty,* gave all their Influence up to the Majority of this Committee, and distributed their Money, and propagated such Sentiments in Clubs, Families, private Conversations and Correspondences, as might best subserve the Views of that Majority of this Committee, and particularly set themselves every where to talk against one of the Committee, whom they thought to be one of the chief in the Opposition to the Measures they were taking, tho' they scarce knew how to speak with respect enough of him but a little before.

The Committee was adjourned to the Day Mr. *H—n* signified that he could conveniently meet them on his Return from his Country House, where he let them know he always stay'd from *Friday till Tuesday.*

The first Day the Committee met, Mr. *H—n*, *without any Vote*, took the Chair, tho' it seems to be contrary to all Order, and to the Course of Business, that the *Chairman of a Body* should at the same time be the *Chairman of a Committee* of that Body.

A Secretary too, the second Officer of the Committee, who was a Clerk of Mr. *J—bs*, tho' no Member of the Committee, took his Place at the Bottom of the Table, without any Vote of the Committee, or any Person's so much as telling the
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the Committee who he was, tho' he was payed by a Contribution of every Gentleman of the Committee.

It seemed to be the Sense of a Majority of that Committee, that in order to make their Report, they should go to some Persons of great Power and Influence, to ask their Advice when, and in what manner, to apply for a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; but a worthy Member of the Committee, who is since dead, moved that they might lay a Memorial before His Majesty, setting forth the great and grievous Hardships the Dissenters lay under from these Laws, with the Prejudice they were of to His Majesty's Government, and humbly beseech His Majesty to take this Matter into His Royal Consideration, as the common Father of all His dutiful Subjects. In this he was seconded by another of the Committee, but that Motion was rejected, tho' possibly it may, by many, be thought to be the wisest Measure they could have taken.

After this Motion for laying a Memorial before His Majesty was rejected, the Person who had seconded it, said, That since that Motion could not be made agreeable to the Committee, he thought they ought to go to the first M——r not for Advice, which was saying they were not determined in their own Minds, was putting themselves in the Power of him whose Advice they asked, and if he was understood not to be for the Repeals for that Time, was indeed begging a Denial: But that he was for going to the first M—r as much as any of them, to let him know that the Dissenters hoped to obtain this Piece of Justice, to acquaint him with the Grounds and Reasons of their Pretensions to it, and to assure him that they would make all suitable Returns, in the most dutiful

tiful and affectionate Zeal for the Government, and the most vigorous Support of all the Friends of Liberty at the ensuing Elections: And farther also to acquaint him, that if from any Difficulty that had not appeared to them in their considering this Matter, it would be inconvenient to grant them the Repeal of these Acts this Session of Parliament, they were ready to accept proper Securities for their obtaining them afterwards.— He farther let them know, that not any thing that had ever been obtained for the Dissenters from the Year 1703, to the Year 1722, (the only Time in which they had ever received any Favours) had been obtained by asking Advice, but by acquainting the M—rs with the reasonable Expectations of the Dissenters, and assuring them of all such Returns to the Government, as could possibly be wished for from the most dutiful Subjects.

This struck the whole Committee at that Time, several of those Persons who afterwards appeared the most zealous against making any Attempts to obtain these Repeals, gave this Member of the Committee great Thanks, and made him great Compliments for setting this Matter in so good a Light, both from Reason and History, and declared they were for going to the great Man in the same manner.

The first M—r was then in *Norfolk*, and was not expected back for some time, that Time therefore was whiled away in the Committee: When he returned to Town, the Chairman acquainted the Committee, that he would let him know that some Gentlemen of the Committee desired to wait upon him, tho' it had been said in the Committee, without being contradicted, that it was hoped the whole Committee might wait upon him.

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The Chairman reported that this Honourable Person would see five or six of the Gentlemen such a Night, The Chairman was asked who those five or six were to meet there, whether any besides the great Man himself, He said eight or nine of the M—rs, It was then said, let nine or ten of the Committee go, But that was overruled, and no more than six were to go, and they to be ballotted for. But it was said by a Gentleman, that the Chairman ought to go in his own Right, without being ballotted for: Such Prerogatives had the Chair in every Case. And by a concerted Ballot five Gentlemen were chosen by pretty even Numbers, three of those who were for an Attempt to obtain the Repeals, and two of those who were against it. But the Member of the Committee who had received such Thanks and Compliments for his great Knowledge and Experience in the Affairs of the Dissenters, and his great and eminent Services to them, was not one of the Number. It was most evidently concerted and stipulated that he should not be one, and three were to be taken of those who were for the Attempt, provided it was but agreed that he should be left out.

The six who went up to meet the M—rs were *Samuel Holden*, Esq; without being ballotted for, *Dr. Avery*, *John Bance*, Esq; *Mr. Bradley*; which three had the most Votes on the Ballot; *Nathaniel Gould*, Esq; and *Stamp Brooksbank*, Esq; These six did not agree in their Report to the Committee of what had pass'd in that Conversation. Some said the M—rs were for the Repeals, others said that they were against them, but most agreed that the then Lord Ch—r spoke strongly for the Repeals, as things that were most highly reasonable and practicable, and that there were
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but one or two of the great Men who spoke against them, and that most of them had been silenced.

Upon this the Committee resolved to report, *That if an Application should be made at this Time, it was not likely to be attended with Success.* Two of the Committee, Lord Barrington and Mr. Bradley, were against this Report, the Truth of it not appearing sufficiently evident, and not being a proper Report on the Matter refer'd. All the rest of the Committee agreed to it.

At the second Meeting in *Silver-street, Nov. 29.* which was by far the greatest that had ever been held by the Dissenters, and consisted, as it was thought, of ten or twelve hundred, Mr. H—n took the Chair again, *not only without any Vote, but without any body so much as calling on him to do it;* and according to his manner immediately open'd this Meeting with a Speech to prepare the Minds of the People met, to agree more readily to the Report that was to be made to them.

After Mr. H—n had deliver'd his Speech and made the Report, a Gentleman stood up and said that he thought this was not a Report proper to the Matter that had been refer'd to the Committee, which was *to consider when and in what manner to apply for the Repeals of the Corporation and Test Acts.* The Chairman, contrary to the known Duty of the Chair and the Freedom of Debate in all Assemblies, reprimanded him with great Severity and Heat, as being highly irregular in expressing his Dislike to a Report of the Committee, tho' he was a Gentleman to whom the Chairman was greatly and publicly obliged for supporting him in the sharp Contests he had had in a certain Company.

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This Sentiment of this Gentleman however prov'd to be the Sentiment of the Assembly, and this Report was disagreed to and recommitted by a Majority of about three Fourths or four Fifths of that Meeting.

Upon this the Gentlemen of the Committee who were against making any Attempt for the Repeals all rose up one after another, and expressed so great a Dissatisfaction with the Assembly, as to decline doing them any further Service in the Committee. And most of those who were for attempting them, discouraged with the little Likelihood they saw of Success, from a want of Harmony and Unanimity in the Committee, did also desire to be excused any further Service. But the Gentlemen who were for quashing the Attempt, and had declined any further Service in the Committee, when they saw a new Committee naming, lest they should lose their Power and give it up to others, did all offer to resume their Seats, *if the Assembly would consent to add no more than four new ones to them, and charge them with no fresh Matter.*

How modest this was in the Committee to presume to make Terms with the Assembly, and how vastly condescending it was in the Assembly to yield to it, let the World judge. The Assembly however candidly accepted of those Gentlemen's Offer, and confined themselves to the Addition the Committee had prescribed them of four more Gentlemen, and chose Mr. John Bedwell, Benjamin Burroughs, Esq; Mr. Thomas Hollis, Edward Leeds, Esq; and then they gave it as an Instruction to this their new Committee, *to make their Report to two Deputies chosen out of every Congregation in London and ten Miles round.* This Addition was made and these Gentlemen

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chosen, because when the Assembly was nominating Persons for a new Committee, it was observ'd that none of the Baptist Denomination were in the former, and desir'd that some of them might be in the new one.

This new Committee met on *Friday, Dec. 1.* and came to the following Resolutions:

That a Letter be written to the Secretary of the Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations, enclosing the Resolution of the Meeting in Silver-street, Nov. 29. desiring the said Ministers to communicate it to their respective Congregations, in order to their chusing two Persons according to the said Resolution, and to return a List of the Persons so chosen to the Chairman, to be attested by the Minister of each Congregation, or other proper Persons where there is a Vacancy.

That a Letter be written by the Chairman conformable to the said Resolution.

The Chairman accordingly sent a Letter, enclosing the Resolution of the Generality, *Nov. 9.* and those other Resolutions of the Committee, to the said Secretary, who laid it before the Committee of Ministers of the three Denominations, which was summon'd by three of their own Number, and had an extraordinary Meeting upon this Occasion *Dec. 5.* when it was agreed to comply with the Desire of the Committee of Gentlemen, and that their Secretary should send a Letter giving notice of this to all the Ministers of the three Denominations.

Upon this the Deputies were chosen, and on the 28th of *December* they met by Summons of Mr. H—n at *Salters-Hall*, and were going to chuse a Chairman of their own, as in all Right and Reason and according to all Order they ought to have done, in order to have received the Report from
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Mr. H—n the Chairman of the Committee. But Mr. H—n being inform'd of this, broke up the Committee abruptly, who had an Hour's Business which they had resolv'd to do, *without any Vote to that purpose*, declaring he would go up and take the Chair of the Meeting, and that if the Assembly of Deputies would not admit him as their Chairman, and them as a Committee to vote as Deputies (though they were not Deputies) he would make no Report to them at all, but leave the Assembly, and desire all others who were of his Mind to follow him down Stairs, and to form another Meeting below. With so calm and gentle a Hand did Mr. H—n all along carry it as Chairman, and so perfect a Consistency is there in all the Parts of his Conduct, when it comes to be narrowly look'd into, with those Speeches of his recommending Peace and Unity, which he has so often and so solemnly made to our Assemblies from the Chair.

As soon as he came up among the Deputies, he went and took *their Chair*, still *without any Vote* for his so doing, and both he and the Committee insisted on a Vote's passing, that the Committee had a Right to vote among the Deputies, tho' it was clearly shewn that the Deputies could not give them such a Right, nor could they receive it. And though the Committee were intreated by a noble Lord, who was one of the Committee and a Deputy too, not to insist on the Vote, but let it pass *sub silentio*, in which he would acquiesce, (though he neither could nor would give his Vote for their having a Right to sit as Deputies and vote as such) yet it could not be obtain'd, but was still insisted on that it should be voted to be their Right: Tho' a Gentleman of the Committee, well known for his Zeal in these high Measures, had in effect given

it up, by appealing from the *Right* and *Justice* of this Point, to the *Equity* and *Candor* of the Deputies themselves.

When the Majority of the Deputies had in a Hurry and Surprize given up that Point to the resolute and unchangeable Demands of the Committee, the Report was made, *That an Application to Parliament the ensuing Session, for a Repeal or Explanation of the Corporation and Test Acts, is not likely to be attended with Success: That upon this Consideration such an Application is by no means advisable.*

No body spoke against this Report but the noble Lord before mention'd, and when he saw that it was agreed to, he spoke for the Deputies adjourning for a short time, that they might have an Opportunity to consider further of what was before them. The Committee in general spoke against this, and none of the Deputies speaking for it, they were adjourn'd *sine die*, and after staying this first time together an Hour or two, were never call'd together, nor ever met again, during the Course of that Year.

The Committee after this had a Meeting, and wrote some Letters to *Bristol*, *Exon*, and *Liverpool*, to acquaint them what the Deputies had done, and to desire the Dissenters in those Parts to concur with them therein; and when they had read and settled their Minutes, and raised Money among themselves to pay the Secretary and defray the other incident Charges, (tho' they would not suffer any Gentleman of the Committee to have a Copy of their Minutes even at his own Expence) they declar'd they had nothing more to do, but to drink a Bottle with the Overplus Money. This was on *Jan. 3. 1732.* Letters were return'd in Answer to those from the several Places to which they

they were wrote, but they were carefully secrete^d, and not so much as communicated to the Committee itself, tho' they were directed to them. Must not such Men * *be of a very singular Make indeed*, after such Conduct as this to think that the Committee and Deputies were like *to part with mutual Satisfaction, and without any Jealousies and Discontents?*

October 16, 1733, the yearly Meeting of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations was held, and it being recommended to them by their Committee, to enquire, *Whether it was not adviseable to have a new Choice of Deputies for the ensuing Year*, it met with great and violent Opposition from the Al—rs and their Adherents; but after a long Debate, the Body came to this Resolution, *That it is the Opinion of this Meeting, that it be recommended by the Ministers of the three Denominations to their respective Congregations, to chuse two Deputies for the Year ensuing, for the Management of the Civil Affairs relating to the Protestant Dissenters.* Upon a Division there appeared to be 36 for it, and 16 against it.

One of the *Minority*, in the Course of the Debate (how agreeably to the Nature and Rules of a Debate, every one may judge) did declare, *That if it was carried by ever so great a Majority, he would pay no Regard to it*; and after it was voted, another of them declared, *That they would have no Deputies.*

Mr. Denham as Chairman of the Body, and Mr. Chandler the Secretary, wrote to the Ministers of the several Congregations to acquaint them with this Resolution; and there having been no Order made by the Meeting of Ministers, to whom the Deputies, when chosen, should be return'd, they did not write to their Brethren to whom they should
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* *Vide Mr. H—n's Speech at Salters-Hall, Feb. 6. 1733.*

make the Returns, tho' it seems most reasonable they should have been made to Mr. *Denham* as Chairman of the Body, by whom the Resolution of the Body had been signified to them. And such a small Defect in Rule and Order, if it must be so called, one would think should not have been an Obstacle and Objection to their doing it, who were of the Minority, since, as far as appears, they have, in the whole of their own *separate* and *clandestine* Proceedings, discarded all Regard to any thing that can be called so.

For some time it was the Design of the *Minority* of Ministers to evade the *Resolution* of the *Body*, and entirely set aside the Choice of Deputies, according to those Declarations which some of them had made, both while it was debating, and after it was carried, at the annual Meeting; and Methods were taken for this Purpose, in hopes they should prevent the *Operation* of the Vote, tho' they were not able to prevent the *carrying* it: An evident Argument this seems to be, how close a Connexion there is at this present Time between the *Choice of Deputies*, and the *Interest of the Dissenters*, that even the *elder* and the *artful* Ministers were not able to beat down the general Sense of it, with the superadded Weight and Influence of their *Money*, and that Load of Contempt they endeavoured to lay on their Brethren who opposed them.

But, however, tho' they could not succeed in this Enterprize, they resolved not to desist from endeavouring to free us from the *dangerous Hands of a free Representative*; and therefore, at a Meeting of some of the *Minority* of Ministers in Conjunction with some others who were not at the general Meeting, they came to a Resolution, *That the old Committee chosen last Year*, (whom, in Reason,

son, one would expect never to hear of more) was yet subsisting, and that they would return the Deputies their Congregations should chuse, to Mr. H—n the Chairman of it. A Resolution this, that appeared strange, not only for the Reason already hinted, but also because, in the annual Meeting of the whole Body of Ministers, it was openly and generally asserted, *that we had no subsisting Committee or Representative of any sort*, that this was the very Ground of the Resolution, and the very Sense of it, and no one Minister appeared at that Time to think the contrary, which yet was a proper Time, and afforded many proper Occasions of asserting it if they had.

In consequence of this Resolution taken by these Ministers, a Letter was sent enclosing it to Mr. H—n, signed by almost all the Independent Brethren, and other Letters were wrote to such Ministers of Congregations in the Country, as the Al—rs had an Influence over (and after what has been said in this Narrative already, it is not to be wondred if many such there were) to return their Deputies when chosen to Mr. H—n, with an Injunction, *to add this particular Clause, that they would be ready to attend the Summons of the Gentlemen of the Committee.*

Various were the Dealings of Mr. H—n and those Ministers and Members of the Committee who acted with him, to get the *Right and Power* of summoning the Deputies, *acknowledged* to be in him, but, as it was to the last insisted on, that he should be allowed to *summon as Chairman of the Committee in their Right*, all Offers of that kind were *rejected*, since those who oppos'd it were firm in their Judgments that no such *Right* could be, and no such *Power* ought to be in him, and were Persons of that Integrity and Resolution
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of Mind, that so long as they thought so, would not have acknowledged it for the World.

In the mean while, several of the Deputies who were chosen for this Year, had Meetings to consult about a proper Method of convening the Body, and after mature Consideration, thirty-five of them summoned the whole Number, as far as by great Diligence and Enquiry they could get the knowledge of them, to meet on *Monday, Jan. 28,* at *Pinner's-Hall*, at nine of the Clock; and there a *Majority* of the Deputies met, and it was intended to chuse a Chairman, and proceed *regularly*, and it was hoped *unanimously*, to consider of the *Trust* that was lodged in their Hands, and the best Means of *faithfully* and *effectually* discharging it.

But here another violent Effort was made in behalf of the Committee, and a great Posse came in Concert to distress the Meeting, and destroy the Design of it, because not summoned under the Authority of the Committee, and to insist on *no Chairman but Mr. H—n, no Business without the Committee.* And this was accordingly insisted on, but with what Decency and Manners, as well as Justice and Equity, I shall not take upon me to say, tho' it was done by Persons who, one would think, should not be unacquainted with either; they will themselves, I believe, remember it with Shame, and be obliged to any who will be so kind as to conceal it: They were heard with great Patience and Decency all that they had to say for a considerable while, but no sooner did a Gentleman on the other Side begin to reply to what had been spoken, but they made such a Tumult and Noise in the Assembly, and insulted him in such a manner, as made it impossible for him to go on.

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However, they not finding, or not imagining the Assembly disposed to give their Sanction to such preposterous Claims, the whole Party withdrew, as some others, who were differently disposed, had done before, who, from the Noise and Tumult they observed in the Assembly, judged that for that time at least, no Business could be done: But many of those who came with disinterested and peaceable Intentions to seek the Service of their common Liberty, remained in the Place, to the Number of above sixty, and with great Calmness, when these Disturbers were gone, proceeded to the Choice of a Chairman, and regularly adjourned themselves, without proceeding to do any other Business; hoping that by time such Animosities would subside, and that they might meet together afterwards with more reasonable Sentiments, and behave there with greater Decency and Temper.

That this Assembly ought to be esteemed the Body of Deputies, and their Resolutions look'd upon as the Acts of the Body, will appear, if we consider that this was a Meeting of Deputies *upon a regular and undisputed Summons, sent to the whole Body*, it being sent by 35 of their own Number, and this is a Rule in all Bodies, *that whatever Number meets at the Time and Place appointed by a regular Summons*, is always look'd on as the Body met, and to have at least the Right and Power of Adjournment in them, and summoning afresh: and this was actually the Case here: for tho' a perfect List could not be got of all the Deputies of the Congregations, they not being all returned to one Person, nor perhaps all chosen, yet two of the Summons were included in a Letter to the Minister of every Congregation whose Deputies were not chosen, or not known to

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the Summoners, so that this was a *Meeting of Deputies upon a regular Summons sent to every individual Member of the Body*, and consequently is to be look'd upon as the Body met, and if not having all the Powers of the Body residing in them, yet at least those which they then exercised.

Moreover, it is allowed that here was actually present a Majority of the Deputies, and tho' many went away before a Chairman was chosen, and they had put themselves into Form, yet being met upon a general Summons, and going away before any Vote of Adjournment (the common Method in which all Bodies break up) their departing could not invalidate the Proceedings of those who remained.

At this Meeting Captain *James Winter* was chosen Chairman, and it was then resolved, *That this Meeting be adjourned to this Day Fortnight, being Monday the 11th Day of February next, at nine of the Clock in the Morning at this Place, and that the Deputies be summoned accordingly.*

But in this Interval of Adjournment, Mr. *H—n* summoned the Members of the Committee to meet again *Jan. 31. at Salter's-Hall*, who had never met since *Jan. 3. of the Year before*, and gave them but one Day's Notice of such an unexpected Meeting, by which Reason several, either thro' Absence or Business, were prevented from being there: it is true he summoned them at the Request of nine of the Deputies, who sent a Letter to him for that Purpose, signed with their Names; but it may justly be queried, Whether the Motion for such a Letter did not take its first Rise from Mr. *H—n* himself, and the small Number of the Committee that acted with him.

It

It seemed strange to many Persons, that Mr. *H—n* and his Friends should take such a Step as this, since if they had looked on themselves as a subsisting Committee, which were still entrusted with the Management of the Civil Affairs of the Dissenters, by virtue of the Instructions they had received of their Constituents, it was altogether inexcusable, and indeed unaccountable, that they had never met in all that time before, especially considering that the Affair of the *Irish* Repeals was all this while depending, which was an Affair of Importance to the *English* as well as *Irish* Dissenters, it having been *promised as a Pledge of the same Favour intended for ourselves*: But how that has been managed, and how equal to the Task of treating with great Men, Mr. *H—n* and his Adherents in the Committee are, the Event manifestly shows; they having trusted in Appearances which deceived no body but themselves, and not all of them neither, and having helped to draw all the Dissenters of *Ireland* into a *shameful Disappointment*.

Upon that Occasion I cannot forbear applying an Observation of a Person much conversant with C—ts and M—rs, and well versed in their Characters and Arts: * *That those Persons who are naturally weak at Court, can never hinder themselves from believing every thing that it is willing to be at the Pains to make them believe. I have observ'd it a thousand and a thousand times, and that whenever they are not made Dupes, it is wholly owing to the Fault of the Minister.*

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Jan.

* Que les gens qui sont naturellement foibles à la Cour, ne peuvent jamais s'empêcher de croire tout ce qu'elle prend la peine de leur vouloir faire croire. Je l'ai observé mille & mille fois, & que quand ils ne sont pas Duppes, ce n'est que la faute du Ministre. *Retz Mem. Vol. I. p. 166. Ed. Amst.*

Jan. 31. Mr. H—n and the Committee met at *Salters-Hall*, and there appear'd only seventeen out of the twenty-four surviving Members of it, and four of those came there only to make their Protest against the Right which the Committee claimed without any Foundation, of still continuing and acting as such: First of all Dr. *Avery*, next to him the Lord Viscount *Barrington*, afterwards Mr. *Bedwell*, and then *Edward Leeds*, Esq; They were not all present at a time, but they all declared and insisted that they had finished the Trust that was committed to their Care, and could not consistently with the Rights of the Dissenters, nor the Regard they owed to the Honour of their own Characters, continue to act as Members of a Committee whose Business was finished, and the Time they were limited to for performing it expired, which to all the World must appear to be thrusting themselves into an Office, and which the whole Body of Dissenters might justly interpret to be an Invasion of their Rights; and having fully and largely argued the Absurdity of their Attempt, they all absolutely refused to act with them. They said they would stay and consult with them willingly, if they would do it in their *private Character* only, but upon their being told that they were there *as a Committee*, they withdrew from the Meeting, tho' they were earnestly intreated to stay.

There were three more who expressed themselves dissatisfied about the Continuance of the Committee, and refused to be concerned in any Act of theirs as such, tho' they determin'd to stay, that they might have the Satisfaction of hearing what might be said to justify their Continuance, as well as what had been argued against it: But it should seem that they went away as
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much if not more dissatisfied of their Right than they had come thither, because after hearing all that could be said to that purpose, they refused to concur with them, and would not vote on any of their Questions. One of them, as I am inform'd, moved it to the Meeting, that if the Deputies were to be summon'd, it might be to meet at the Time and Place that the Body at *Pinners-Hall* had adjourned to, but no such Motion could go down with the Committee: And indeed it affords very just Ground to suspect that Mr. H—n and those who adhered to him must have *some Point to carry*, and somewhat that they were *vehemently set upon*, that contrary to the *Tenor of their Trust*, contrary to the *Sentiments so freely declared in the Body of Ministers at their annual Meeting*, contrary to the *Sentiments of most of the Dissenters in general*, and to *so considerable a Number of the Committee*, they would still push their Pretensions to a Right of continuing and acting in that Capacity; but this was of a piece with the rest of their Conduct, they having always acted as the most *determined Persons* in the whole Course of this Affair.

There were ten only who voted for the Question that was moved at that Assembly, which was *for summoning the Body of Deputies*, and yet in the Summons which was issued to convene them this is called the *unanimous Desire of the Committee*, but how far it could be called a *unanimous Desire*, or a Desire of a *Majority*, the World will judge from the foregoing Facts: However, in consequence of this Meeting of the Committee, the Deputies were summoned to meet on *Wednesday, Febr. 8.* at *Salters-Hall*, and summoned under the *sole Authority of the Committee*, tho' the Body had already regularly met at *Pinners-Hall* on *Jan. 28.*

and

and had adjourned themselves to the same Place on *Monday* the 11th of *February*.

Every one may see what those Gentlemen who met Mr. *Holden* and his Adherents of the Committee did there in their printed Resolutions, Mr. *H—n* made a fourth Speech at that time to the Assembly, concerning which the Publick has long since been enabled to form a Judgment: And it was not a little surprizing to many, to see, besides other things that are there, such a Representation of Mr. *Dodrige's* Case, as not only made a Matter of *Favour*, of a thing which is only a *Point of Law*, which the Dissenters have never been denied even when the Times ran highest against them, but also carried in it an Insinuation against the Judges themselves, as *needing the Influence of Men in Power* to do *Acts of common Justice and Law* to their Fellow-Subjects; there are also in this Speech such Pretences to Interest and Favour with Gentlemen in Power, as it was thought ill-judged to drop so close upon the Heels of the *Irish* Disappointment. This was thought to be very injudicious, and to shew that the Committee had as little Skill to conduct their Power, as they had Right to possess it.

The Deputies who met there thanked the Committee for their past Services, *resolved that the Committee doth subsist, i. e.* resolved a Matter of Fact to be different from what it was, *and be desired to continue a Year longer*, as their Committee, though they can't be their Committee since they are not Deputies, nor were they the Body of Deputies who desired this of them, but a private Party Meeting only: They *resolved that Deputies should be chosen a Year hence, and returned to Mr. H—n, and that a Committee may be chosen either out of themselves or others*; by which last Resolution there evidently

evidently appears to be a Design formed, and a Foundation laid for chusing either *the same or some such like Committee* the next Year as was chosen the last.

There was one thing more done at this Meeting, and that is, the Letter the Committee wrote last Year to *Bristol*, and *Liverpool*, and *Exon* was then read to the Deputies, but because they did not think fit to read the Letters they received in return, I have subjoined the Copy of one of them, the only one I could procure, to this Narrative: And the Reasons I dare say will arise in full View to every Reader from that Letter itself, why the Gentlemen of the Committee did not think fit to communicate it to the Deputies, tho' I doubt whether they will be thought to redound to the Honour of those who suppressed it, it having plainly the Appearance of *Partiality and Unfairness*, to pretend to lay their Conduct before the Deputies, when they designedly concealed from them that which it most concerned them and was of most Importance to the common Interest for them to know; it is submitted whether this was any better than *mocking and imposing* on them.

Feb. 11, the Deputies met at *Pinner's-Hall* according to their regular Adjournment, and besides other Business, for which I refer to their printed Minutes, the Assembly came to these following Resolutions: *That a Committee be chosen out of their own Body, That the Number of such Committee be 15, and That they be chosen by Ballot on Wednesday February 20, at 9 of the Clock in the Morning at this Place, and That if any List should contain the Names of any such as are not Deputies, it should be void*; and then the Assembly adjourned to *Wednesday the 20th of February*, at 9 of the Clock in the Morning.

Feb.

Feb. 20, the Deputies met pursuant to their Adjournment, and after taking the Ballot, it was resolved, That this Committee be called a Committee of Enquiry and Proposals, and That after being declared, they should withdraw and adjourn themselves to some proper Time and Place: And then the Persons appointed to examine the Ballot, reported, that the Majority was fallen on Dr. Benjamin Avery, the Lord Viscount Barrington, Henry Bendish Esq; Mr. John Bedwell, John Cay Esq; John Copeland Esq; Mr. Josiah Chitty, Robert Ferguson Esq; Mr. John Hollis, Mr. Joseph Jordan, Deputy William Pomeroy, Richard Ricards Esq; Mr. John Reynolds, Mr. William Robinson, William Tempest Esq;

It may be proper here to observe, that it had long been the Opinion of many of the Dissenters, that if a Deputation could be procured all over the Kingdom, and a Correspondence settled thro'out the whole Body, it would tend greatly to unite, strengthen, and revive their Interest, which for want of this, among other Causes, had fallen into Decay, and run almost to ruin: This had been thought of and wish'd for by many of the present (and, if my Information is right, had once been concerted, but unhappily prevented and obviated in the last) Generation, who are the heartiest Friends to the Interest of the Dissenters; and at the second Meeting of the Generality in *Silver-Street*, when it was resolved that the Committee should make their Report to Deputies chosen by the Congregations of Dissenters within 10 Miles of *London*, it was moved and pressed by a Member of the Committee, *That they might report to Deputies from the more distant Parts of the Kingdom, as well as from London and the Parts adjacent*, but that Motion was opposed and over-ruled by several of the Committee.

Some of the Deputies thought it adviseable, and determined to propose this Matter afresh at this Meeting, as a thing which they not only thought would cement the Body into a firm Union, and make their Consultations concerning their common Interest of more Weight and Efficacy, but which our present Circumstances seemed to afford a most likely and promising Opportunity of obtaining:—And accordingly, after it had been opened to the Assembly, and debated for some time, the Assembly came to the following Resolutions in relation thereunto; Resolved, *That the Ministers of the Congregations of the Protestant Dissenters of the three Denominations in such Cities which are Counties, and in one City, Port, or chief Town of every County in England and Wales, and Town of Berwick upon Tweed, be writ to, to desire them to recommend it to all the Contributors of their respective Congregations, to chuse Deputies for such City, Port, or Town, as soon as may be, and in such manner as they think most expedient, to join the Deputies at their next Meeting at Pinner's-Hall, to manage the Civil Affairs of the Protestant Dissenters; and that the said Ministers be desired to return the Names of such Deputies as shall be chosen, to Captain James Winter the Chairman, the next Post after the Election.*

Resolved, *That it be an Instruction to the Committee, to write such Letters, and that they be signed by the Chairman of the Deputies.* It was also

Ordered, *That the Committee do draw up a State of the Dissenting Interest, and lay it before the Deputies at their next Meeting.*—And after this the Assembly adjourned to *Wednesday* the third of *April* next, at nine of the Clock in the Morning.

The Committee having withdrawn according to the Resolution of the Body, adjourned themselves to the next Day, *Thursday* 21.

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only being present, they adjourned themselves again to *Friday 22.* ——— And then they took into their Consideration the Instruction of the Body about inviting Deputies from the Country, and agreed to the Form of a Letter to be wrote to the Ministers of the Congregations of such Places as the Resolution of the Body specifies.

In the mean time, on *Friday, March 1,* the Deputies received a Summons signed by *William Hodgkin,* to meet on *Wednesday, March 6,* at *Salter's-Hall,* without mentioning by whose Order or Direction he had sent it, it was expected by many that this Meeting was designed for the making of some Overtures of Peace and Union, especially since some Persons who were extremely desirous of it, had signified their Wishes and Hopes to this Effect, to some of the Committee, with their Readiness to come into any Measures that should be thought to consist with the Honour of both Sides, and to tend to the Prosperity of the whole Body; And it was likewise thought, that if Mr. *H—n* really was as desirous of Peace as he seemed to be in his late Speech at *Salter's-Hall,* he would do his Endeavour to inspire such Sentiments in the rest of the Committee, as should dispose them to receive, if not first to offer Measures for Union, especially considering that they had been the sole Authors of our Divisions; but so far was the Disposition of the Committee from leaning at all this way, that tho' some Persons who went there with that View, did move that they would appoint some of their Number to meet and confer with some of the Deputies, who had met at *Pinner's-Hall* for that End and Purpose, yet this met with such a Reception, as shew'd Mr. *H—n* to mean nothing by Peace but entire Subjection to him

him and the Committee, and that no other Councils were agreeable to their Views, than such as tended to *settle them in absolute Power over the Dissenters, and the arbitrary Government and Disposal of their Affairs.*

At this Meeting, *Samuel Holden Esq;* in the Chair, after the printed Minutes of the Body of Deputies which had met at *Pinner's-Hall* on the 28th of *January*, and the 11th and 20th of *February* last, had been read, and the fore-mentioned Motion for Peace and Union had been disdainfully rejected, they came to the following Resolutions.

Resolved, That the Meeting of a small Number of Deputies in a separate Body under the Name of the Deputies of the several Congregations of Protestant Dissenters of the three Denominations in and within ten Miles of London, in Opposition to a great Majority of the whole Body of Deputies, tends to divide and weaken the Interest of the Dissenters.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the Dissenters in the Country, at the ensuing Elections for Members of Parliament, to promote the Interest of such Persons as are known to be well affected to his Majesty's Person and Government, and to the Civil and Religious Liberties of our Country.

Resolved, That these Resolutions be communicated to the Dissenters in the Country, in such manner as the Committee shall think fit.

March 8, Mr. H——n sent a Letter into the Country, as from the Committee, along with these Resolutions. After complaining of the Conduct of some Gentlemen, from which unhappy Divisions have arisen, who not being contented to move in the Circle they were chosen for, have by the Resolutions they have come to, taken the most effectual Means to spread the Division throughout the whole Kingdom ; (in

which Words, tho' intended for other Persons, they have most exactly deliver'd their own Character) they have added the following Paragraph, which is worthy a Remark.

We shall not (say they) enter into a particular Detail of the several Steps which have been taken to prevent Matters coming to this Extremity, or aggravate the Proceedings of the Gentlemen in the Opposition, but leave it to you and the World to judge what Views they have, and what Consequences must necessarily follow from so unnatural a Division.

Would not every one be ready to imagine from this Paragraph, that these Gentlemen had made many Overtures of Peace and Proposals of Union, and taken Measures for procuring Harmony and Unanimity among the Dissenters, and had unhappily fail'd of it thro' the *Perverseness of their Opponents*? And that the Gentlemen who have opposed them, are acted merely by a *Spirit of Opposition* and *latent Views*, which are incompatible with the *publick Interest of the Body of Dissenters*? Should not these Gentlemen let the Persons they appeal to, have some Facts to support these Suggestions, or else, in honour, give over making them? But the truth is, those Gentlemen's Strength does not lie in a *Detail of Facts* (which is prudently avoided by them) but in *general Insinuations only, unsupported by any Facts*, by which they endeavour to fasten the present Distress and Division of our Interest, upon Persons who neither by *Principle*, by *Interest*, or by their *past Conduct*, are in the least open to any such Suspicions.

These Gentlemen have indeed made many Motions to *establish themselves and their Power as a Committee*, and have, it must be own'd, been very *desirous of a Harmony and Unanimity amongst the Dissenters in owning their Right, and submitting themselves*

selves entirely to their Government and Direction: but as for Motions for Peace and Union among us in *any other Respect*, they have been so far from *setting on foot, encouraging, or showing any Regard* to them, that they have *constantly rejected them*; for which I appeal to those made at the Meetings at *Salter's-Hall*, *January 31*, and *March 6*, besides others in a more private way, so far were these Gentlemen from having any Views to Peace or Union, unless in submitting to them, that, if my Information is right, it was with great Difficulty that they were brought to admit of the Question for a Choice of a new Committee next Year; for tho' the first Motion was that the Choice might be made out of *Deputies only*, they could not be persuaded to it without taking away the Limitation of it to *Deputies*, and putting it *Deputies or others*.

Thus I have endeavour'd to give a fair Narrative of the Conduct of the Dissenters in this important Affair for these three Years past, in which Time it has been agitated.

And on reading this short Narrative every one may see that this Committee have all along ruled all the Meetings both of the Generality and the Deputies in *Silver-street* and at *Salters-Hall*, with the concurring Help of our L—d A—rs, and that by joining in a strict Union together they had gone a great way towards enslaving the Body of Dissenters, first to themselves, and afterwards to whomsoever they pleased.

By this it will appear, that the Opposition which has been carried on against them has not arisen, as they have freely but falsely and maliciously asserted, from a Design to disturb the Measures of the M——y, but purely from a Sense of that Slavery and Destruction which was seen to be preparing by their tyrannick Measures, for us and our Interest, and a Desire of preventing it.

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By this it will appear, that this Committee and our Al—rs are of all Men most unfit to manage our Civil Affairs for us, not only as they have already *grossly misconducted*, not to say *betrayed* them, but as they lie under such Obligations to those with whom they treat about the Recovery of our Rights, as will render the Desire of them more weak from their Mouths than any others whatsoever.

By this it will appear, that not the Civil Affairs at large of the Dissenters, but that of the Repeals alone, is what has been had in all this time under Consideration, by the Meeting of Nineteen, and by the several Meetings of the Generality, and that that Affair alone was committed to the Care both of the first and second Committee chosen by them at *Silver-street*; and that in all the Trusts which have been reposed in them, they have ever been limited by their Principals both as to Matter and Time.

By this it will appear, that the Money our Ministers receive from those who they own *never grant their Favours without their Views*, has been a great Means of disconcerting our Measures in the Pursuit of the Repeals, and of disappointing our Hopes of obtaining them: And that we can never be safe in our Liberties and Interests, while we remain subject to the Influence of that *which has already bought almost all the Liberties of Mankind*, and while we are governed by those *who generally speaking have been the Instruments of selling them*.

By this it will be seen, on whomsoever it may have been laid, who are the Persons who have indeed divided us, and that they have made such a Division absolutely necessary and unavoidable, since it was not in our Power to see our dearest Liberty wounded, and lying as it were in its last Agonies, without using our earnest and utmost Endeavours for its Preservation and Safety. By

By this it will appear, how dangerous it is to submit to the Power that the Chairman and the Committee assume, and how necessary to oppose it, in order to prevent the Growth of their daily Usurpations and Encroachments on the Liberties of the several Congregations of Dissenters of the three Denominations, and the Deputies who represent them: For if our Affairs must be established in the Course that these Gentlemen have hitherto put them, we may bid adieu to our Liberty for ever, and this and all succeeding Generations will have Reason to look upon these very Persons, our *pretended Friends*, as born for the utter Destruction of our Cause, which the *open Enemies* of it had never been able to effect.

And finally by this Narrative it will appear, that the Body of Deputies has been regularly assembled and regularly formed at *Pinner's-Hall*, at which Place they have hitherto met, and were last adjourned to *Wednesday* the 3d of *April* next, at 9 of the Clock in the Morning, whither it is hoped the Wisdom of the Deputies, and their Care of the Civil Affairs of the Dissenters committed to them for this Year, will incline them generally to resort: As they are all as hearty and undoubted Friends to his Majesty's Royal Person and Government, as any who enjoy the innumerable Blessings of his auspicious Reign, so it is not doubted but they will *then* manifest, as well as *at all other times they have cordially and constantly done*, the most laudable and becoming Zeal for the Maintenance and Support of them. And it is hoped the World will not impute it to them as a Crime, if *they think and judge that they can be more serviceable to them by maintaining their Liberties, than by selling or sacrificing them to any Set of Men whatsoever*.

F I N I S.

By this it will appear, how dangerous it is to submit to the Power that the Chairman and the Committee assume, and how necessary to oppose it in order to prevent the Growth of their daily Oppressions and Encroachments on the Liberties of the several Congregations of Dissenters of the three Denominations, and the Dissenters who represent them: For if our Affairs must be conducted in the Course that these Gentlemen have hitherto pursued, we may bid adieu to our Liberty for ever, and thus end all succeeding Generations will have Reason to look upon their very Liberties, our present Liberty, as born for the mere Destruction of our State, which the Government of it had not been able to effect.

And finally by this Narrative it will appear that the Body of Dissenters has been regularly assembled and regularly convened at Powers-Hall, at which Place they have hitherto met, and were last adjourned to meet on the 2d of April next, at 9 of the Clock in the Morning, whether it is hoped the Wisdom of the Dissenters, and their Care of the Civil Rights of the Dissenters committed to them for this Year, will incline them generally to resist: As they are all so hearty and undoubted Friends to his Majesty's Royal Person and Government, as any who enjoy the innumerable Blessings of his Majesty's Right, so it is not doubted but they will so unanimously, as well as at all other times, be determinedly and consistently, the most judicious and becoming Zeal for the Maintenance and Support of them. And it is hoped the World will not impute it to them as a Crime, if they do not neglect that they have been feasible to take by maintaining the Liberty that is falling in Justice.



A
C O P Y
O F A
L E T T E R

Sent from *Bristol*, in Answer to one
the COMMITTEE wrote thither
last Year.

GENTLEMEN,

WE are favoured with your Letter of the
3d Instant, which brought us the Resolu-
tion of the Assembly of Deputies at *Salters-Hall*
on the 29th of *November* last, in relation to the
Expediency of a present Attempt for repealing
or explaining the Corporation and Test Acts.

You tell us we are indebted for this Favour to
the Care of the Assembly for preserving a good
Understanding and Harmony amongst the Dis-
senter in general. We wish that Sentiment had
prevail'd sooner, for we have been informed that
a Question was moved in the Assembly of the
29th of *November*, which in our Apprehension had
a most apparent Tendency to preserve Union and
Harmony between the Dissenters of *London* and
Parts adjacent, and those of the most distant Parts

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of the Kingdom: That Question was opposed by some Gentlemen of the Committee. We need not be more particular. You know the Fate of that Question, and from what Quarter the Opposition came. We wish the Proceedings of the Committee itself had not given Room for some Expostulations on a like Account.

But we impose Silence on our selves on that Head, and take this Opportunity to assure you, that as we concur in Opinion with you, that an Application to Parliament, *as things now stand*, from a single Place, or from a few Places, unsupported by the Body of Dissenters, or at least a considerable Majority of them, may meet with a Reception dishonourable to our common Interest, we for our selves resolve to conduct our selves accordingly, and have communicated our Resolution with our Advice to the same Effect to our Friends at *Liverpool*.

Not that we think an Application this Session would have been at all improper, *if the Affair was now recent, and the Miscarriages of a few Months past could be recalled*. But — we remember we are complaining of the Mistakes of our Friends, Friends united with us in the common Interest of Truth and Liberty, and therefore we will not enlarge on so disagreeable a Subject.

We return you our hearty Thanks for the Assurances you give us that you will ever keep the Repeal in View, and carefully watch all favourable Opportunities for obtaining it: We for our Parts are determined to do the same; and if the Gentlemen in Power continue to entertain the same just Sentiments of it, as we have the Pleasure to hear from you they now do, surely those favourable Opportunities cannot be far off.

For

For if they think the Repeal will have a Tendency to secure Civil and Religious Liberty, and the Protestant Succession in his Majesty's Family, to strengthen the Protestant Interest in general, and to rescue a sacred Ordinance from a shameful Prostitution: They likewise will ever keep it in their View, and watch with us, and for us, all favourable Opportunities for bringing it about; and will not suffer themselves to be directed by a groundless Apprehension of future Evils (the Suggestion frequently of Indolence and unmanly Fear) from pursuing a Point, which not only in its great and valuable Effects, but in the personal Glory that will attend their Success in it, will so amply reward all the Pains they can take about it.

We are, &c.



For if they think the Royal will have any
duty to do for God and Kingdom's Liberty, and
the President's Succession in his Majesty's Family,
to strengthen the President's Power in general,
and to reduce a heavy Oppression from a particular
Prohibition: They themselves will ever keep it in
their view, and watch with us, and for us, all
Advocates of Oppression, for doing it about,
and will not let the subject to be divided by a
groundless supposition of error. In the Sig-
nature of Liberty of Indolence and unwarlike Love,
from pursuing a Point, which not only in its great
and valuable Effect, but in the personal Glory
that will attend their Success in it, will to supply
toward it the same they can take upon it.

2005

